

Faculty Senate Agenda & Minutes

November 8, 2019, 2:30-4:30pm

Location: NCB 160 (or [via Zoom](#) for those outside Blacksburg)

Present: Biko Agozino, Diane Agud, Mehdi Ahmadian, Robin Allnut, Susan Anderson, Richard Ashley, Michael Borowski, Leandro Castello, Benjamin Corl, Matt Eick, John Ferris, Matthew Gabriele, John Galbraith, Nicolin Girmes-Grieco, Roie Hauser, James Hawdon, Dana Hawley, Bob Hicok, Christine Kaestle, Eric Kaufman, Bradley Klein, Bettina Koch, Jake Lahne, Zachary Mackey, Paul Marek, Cayce Myers, Amy Nelson, Marie Paretti, Patrick Pithua, R. Scott Pleasant, Robin Queen, Susanna Rinehart, Hans Robinson, Todd Schenk, Yang Shao, Ashley Shew, Ryan Speer, Tess Thompson, Jim Tokuhisa, Vinodh Venkatesh, Layne Watson, Anthony Wright de Hernandez, Monty Abbas, Masoud Agah, Arthur Ball, Tanyel Bulbul, Robert Bush, Charles Calderwood, Virgilio Centeno, Kelly Cobourn, Eloise Coupey, George Davis, Henri de Hahn, Sam Doak, Harry Dorn, William Galloway, Ellen Gilliland, Eunju Hwang, Sara Jordan, Roberto Leon, Chang Lu, Jordan MacKenzie, Eric Martin, Margarita McGrath, Polly Middleton, Mike Nappier, David Radcliffe, Richard Shryock, Eric Smith, Stephen Smith, Divya Srinivasan, Cornel Sultan, Jay Teets, Diego Troya, Mark Van Dyke, Dwight Viehland, Bruce Vogelaar, Robert Weiss, Cynthia Wood, Liqing Zhang, Ryan Zimmerman,

Guests: Coogan Thompson (GSA)

Approval of Agenda

Agenda approved by unanimous consent.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes of October 25th meeting were approved with minor edits.

Announcements

- [Climate Action Resolution](#) Poll Results: While 36 people have already voted, the poll remains open until November 14th, and those who have not yet voted are encouraged to do so.
- Call for Service on the Assessment of Faculty Assessment Committee: Jim Hawdon asked for someone from each college to recruit a representative to serve on this committee.
- Working with [Services for Students with Disabilities \(SSD\)](#): Jim Hawdon shared concerns expressed by colleagues about issues with SSD, including difficulties with scheduling. He invited others to share known issues.
 - The SSD office is being stretched with resources and in a state of transition.
 - Senators expressed concern about the limited support for students more broadly, some of which may be related to increased enrollment.
 - One pending concern relates to scheduling of final exams.
 - Senators suggested a conversation with SSD would be helpful.
- Charge Meeting for Enrollment Advisory Committee: John Ferris noted this committee will meet on Monday, November 11th. If someone else has expertise or interest, John is willing to have them represent the faculty instead of him.
- Accessibility: John Ferris was part of a recent meeting with administrators, where the discussion surrounded a variety of accessibility issues. John is inviting a handful of Senators who have interest in accessibility issues to be part of a committee to

engage in related deliberation. Those interested should email John (jbferris@vt.edu).

Topic 1: Reaction to AAUP Statement on Tenure

John Ferris shared the following recommendation from AAUP regarding institutional regulations on academic freedom and tenure:

All full-time faculty members, regardless of rank, are to be considered eligible for tenure, “with the exception of special appointments clearly limited to a brief association with the institution, . . . all full-time faculty appointments are of two kinds: (1) probationary appointments; (2) appointments with continuous tenure.”

John had considered including this as part of the upcoming Board of Visitors (BOV) address. He welcomes comments but is likely to refrain from introducing this subject at this time. This could be a topic of discussion at a future Faculty Senate meeting, with intentional input from non-tenure-track faculty. Other comments on the BOV address are welcome and may be shared directly with John (jbferris@vt.edu).

Topic 2: Discussion of [P & T \(Chapter 3\) Revision to Handbook](#)

Bob Hicok shared the current proposed revisions to Chapter 3 of the Faculty Handbook, including an overview document of proposed changes (Appendix A). These changes have not yet been presented for first reading with the Commission on Faculty Affairs (CFA), but that may occur at the next meeting, with the hope that a resolution would complete the governance process this academic year. Faculty Senate input at this stage can help guide CFA in their deliberations of any potential amendments. A key question for consideration is: “Can your department’s practices work within these parameters?”

- Currently, language varies between guidelines from the Provost’s Office and policy in the Faculty Handbook. The proposed edits are intended to closely follow language from the Provost’s Office, since the Provost’s guidelines dictate the format dossiers being reviewed.
- One of the notable proposed revisions is to change “research” to “scholarship” as a more inclusive term.
- The department-level Expectations Documents are an important consideration, because any denial of tenure or promotion would need to be explained in terms of those Expectations. Senators shared lingering questions about the development of the Expectations Documents. Bob has seen Expectations Documents from every department or college and noted there is a wide variation. The proposed policy requires departmental faculty to vote on the Expectations Document, though it is likely many departments have not yet done this.
- The prior policy suggested decisions could be based on excellence in teaching, research, or outreach, whereas the proposed language more clearly emphasizes a focus on scholarship. Specifically: “While candidates are not expected to have equal levels of commitment or equal responsibilities in all of the activities mentioned above, some scholarship is expected of all tenure-track faculty in at least one of Virginia Tech’s mission areas.”

- There are some questions about the integration with the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine (VTCSOM), but VTCSOM currently maintains its own guidelines, and that may continue.
- There was a question about the phasing on scholarship potential being reached. Specifically: “Promotion to the rank of professor requires evidence that a candidate’s scholarship has had impact nationally or internationally and that their earlier potential has been reached.” This is intended mirror language about the candidate’s trajectory at the stage of promotion to associate professor.
- Details about “grandfathering” the policies and expectations need to be added to the document or resolution. When new standards are adopted, it is important to ensure those who have already been on the tenure track are not punished during the transition.
- Senators expressed appreciation to Bob for working through the proposed language changes.
- Some of the proposed edits to the handbook are in response to concerns in recent years about promotion and/or tenure cases that did not go smoothly. The proposed policies require notification to the candidate at each stage, and cases are required to proceed through the process unless the candidate requests to withdraw. Prior restrictions on appeal have also been removed.
- The proposed revisions may be shared with departmental faculty. Bob welcomes feedback, yet noted the editing must occur through CFA (not Faculty Senate). Faculty are encouraged to inundate Bob with feedback on the proposed revisions. He would like work on edits over winter break so the resolution can continue through the governance process during the spring semester and be voted on by BOV in June.

Other Business

- [Scooters on campus](#): Hans Robinson shared concerns about the scooters around campus, noting that some consider them a “menace.” The question is: “Have concerns reached a level that Faculty Senate would want to do something about this?”
 - While the scooters have cameras and sensors as part of a research project, the consent to participate in the research is by the rider, not pedestrians. However, because the scooters are in public spaces, the discernment was that there is no expectation of privacy in public.
 - Several Senators have noted awareness of accidents and injuries resulting from the scooters. Lawyers are recruiting claimants, which suggests class-action lawsuits may be coming.
 - The Town of Blacksburg is working to craft a scooter ordinance to avoid a scooter company from simply dropping the scooters in Blacksburg.
 - Wireless broadcasting from the scooters has impacted the theater department by disrupting the operation of wireless microphones.
 - The Transportation and Parking Committee has been discussing the scooters in recent meetings.
 - Faculty Senators suggested it would have been helpful to have more advance warning about the scooters coming to campus, allowing time for input.

Although the scooters are part of a research study, it may be the initial request to bring the scooters to campus may have come from the scooter company.

Adjourn

The meeting formally adjourned at 4:17pm.

Respectfully submitted by Eric Kaufman, Faculty Senate Secretary.

Appendix A: Overview of Proposed Changes to Chapter 3 of the Faculty Handbook

Major changes (proposed but not approved) to Chapter 3 of the Faculty Handbook: Employment Policies and Procedures for Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty

Derived from draft revision dated 10/12/19 (filename “P & T FH revision whole – 29 (for FS and Deans”))

1) Added the following language about limitations on the overall process and review of procedural concerns raised by faculty serving on P & T committees (3.4, Page 1):

Once a promotion and/or tenure case has been submitted, it must proceed through the processes outlined in this chapter unless the candidate chooses to withdraw his or her case. This is true even if a candidate has accepted a position at another institution: under these circumstances, the case proceeds normally, up to and including the president’s recommendation, but will not be taken to the Board of Visitors.

To ensure the honest discussion of promotion and/or tenure cases, all parties involved must keep the deliberations strictly confidential. As such, the content of conversations and the results of any votes may be discussed only with persons who have a current role in the promotion and tenure process, such as committee members or administrators. However, faculty serving on promotion and tenure committees who believe that Faculty Handbook procedures are not being followed may bring their concerns to the Faculty Review Committee for confidential review and possible action as outlined in chapter one, “Faculty Review Committee.”

2) Added description of P & T documents required for each department (3.4, Pages 1-2):

Departments will document the process by which faculty apply for promotion and/or tenure; the rules governing eligibility and selection of promotion and tenure committee members and the committee chair; operating guidelines for the committee’s deliberations; the department expectations for the levels of achievement necessary for promotion and/or tenure; and all other relevant information necessary to clarify how the promotion and tenure process is handled within the department. Departments can maintain one or several documents that cover their guidelines and procedures, but all documents must be formally approved by the faculty.

3) Revised the basic criteria for promotion and/or tenure and added the use of Expectations Documents. Changed the categories (Instruction, Research, etc), and most of the language used to describe them, to agree with the Provost’s guidelines (3.4.4, Pages 6-7):

Current: Each candidate for tenure and/or promotion to associate professor is evaluated in the light of the triple mission of the university: learning, discovery, and engagement. Although not all candidates are expected to have equal levels of commitment or equal responsibilities in each of these missions, a high level of general competence is expected in recognition of the need for flexibility in the future establishment of priorities in academic programs. Beyond that basic foundation of competence, decisions related to tenure or promotion to associate professor require evidence of excellence in at least one area.

The award of tenure is based on the achievement of distinction in an area of learning and the prediction of eminence throughout the individual’s professional career. The documentation and evaluation should recognize some significant impact of the candidate’s contributions beyond the

borders of the university. If the primary strength is in instruction, there should be recognition that the candidate's pedagogical contributions have influence beyond the immediate classroom; if in research, that there is significant impression on colleagues nationally; if in outreach that the influence of the contributions reaches beyond the immediate clientele.

Proposed: In accordance with their assignments and as outlined in the "Virginia Tech Guidelines for Promotion and Tenure" document available from the provost's office, candidates for promotion and/or tenure will be evaluated in the following categories: Teaching and Advising Effectiveness (including outreach and extension instruction); Scholarship; International and Professional Service and Additional Outreach and Extension Activities; and University Service.

Teaching and Advising Effectiveness: Teaching and advising are multifaceted activities. In any assessment of a candidate for promotion and tenure, both the quality and the quantity of the individual's achievements in teaching and advising should be considered. Those evaluating candidates for promotion or tenure should give special consideration to teaching effectiveness: faculty must demonstrate the ability to evaluate scholarship applicable to their field and effectively teach their discipline to students. Advising and mentoring of students, both formally and informally, is an essential faculty role.

Scholarship: Scholarship, broadly defined at Virginia Tech as the discovery, transmission, and/or application of knowledge, takes many forms, including but not limited to research, creative activity, and extension activity. While both the quality and quantity of a candidate's achievements should be examined, quality should be the primary consideration. Quality should be defined largely in terms of the work's importance in the progress or redefinition of a field or discipline, the establishment of relationships among disciplines, the improvement of practitioner performance, or in terms of the creativity of the thought and methods behind it. To be awarded tenure, a candidate must provide evidence that their scholarship has growing impact nationally or internationally and the potential for greater impact in the future. Promotion to the rank of professor requires evidence that a candidate's scholarship has had sustained impact nationally or internationally, including a description of how their scholarship has influenced their field.

International and Professional Service and Additional Outreach and Extension Activities: Faculty members should seek ways in which they connect their scholarship to enhance international and global understanding as well as advance their professional disciplines. The quality and effectiveness of international activities, professional service, and outreach and extension activities that are not considered scholarship, should be documented.

University Service: Faculty members have significant roles in the governance, development, and vitality of the University and academic professions, and must demonstrate their service to the University and relevant professional organizations.

While candidates are not expected to have equal levels of commitment or equal responsibilities in all of the activities mentioned above, some scholarship is expected of all tenure-track faculty in at least one of Virginia Tech's mission areas.

Evaluators must take unique features of every candidate's discipline and assignment into account. Therefore, each department is required to have an Expectations Document that accounts for disciplinary differences unique to and within the department and specifies what is required of their faculty members to fulfill the general expectations outlined in above. These distinctions can be clarified only at the department level and must be adhered to by evaluators at every stage of the promotion and/or tenure process. Expectations Documents will be written with the participation of faculty and approved by a vote of the tenure-track faculty in the department. Departments should carefully assess and state the overall standards of professional performance and contribution they consider minimally acceptable for the conferral of promotion and/or tenure. Standards developed and approved by departments and the head or chair are reviewed by the college-level promotion and tenure committee, the dean, and the provost [evaluate/review, send feedback to faculty for revision]. Once approved, the Expectations Documents are published and made available on-line. Revisions to Expectations Documents also follow these procedures. A college may elect to adopt an Expectations Document that applies to all departments and schools in the college, which likewise should account for differences within and across departments and schools. Candidates must be evaluated according to the Expectations Document in effect at the time of their hire. Expectations Documents can be separate from or added to existing department promotion and tenure documents.

3) Heads/chairs no longer have the option to serve on department committees (3.4.4.1, Pages 8).

4) For mandatory cases, full college review (both dean and college committee) of no/no decisions at the department level would be automatic (3.4.4.2, Page 9).

5) Members of college and university committees must be given a period of time to discuss the cases w/o deans or the provost in attendance (3.4.4.2, 3.4.4.3, Pages 10 & 12).

6) The procedures covered in a document titled "Promotion and/or Tenure Procedures for University Committee Deliberations and Notifications" were not in the Faculty Handbook. We included a stripped-down version of those procedures and made clear that the handbook provides the standard for the Univ. P & T Committee procedures, not the other way around (3.4.4.3, Pages 11-13).

7) Clarified that the University Promotion and Tenure Committee only votes once by removing the use of terms such as "straw votes" or "straw ballots" in favor of the following (3.4.4.3, Page 12):

The committee then rates the cases to clarify which cases need more discussion.

8) Added a candidate notification sub-section. Candidates are notified of the decision at each level of the process (3.4.4.4, Pages 13):

As a promotion and/or tenure case proceeds, the candidate must be notified in writing of the recommendations made by each committee and administrator.

Any negative recommendations, whether by a committee or administrator, must include all substantive reasons for that decision, including references to the relevant Expectations Documents, as well as options for appeal. While notification letters may include excerpts from committee or administrator letters, they cannot include the results of any votes, the names of external evaluators, or statements from their evaluations.

(Please note that very few cases are turned down each year, and there are very few split votes along the way, so the number of letters about negative recommendations wouldn't be high.)

9) Revised the grounds for appeal and clarified the relationship between an appeal and a grievance (3.4.5, Page 14):

Current: The appeal can only be based on grounds that certain relevant information was not provided or considered in the decision, or that the decision was influenced by improper consideration.

Proposed: An appeal can be based on the following claims only: department criteria in the relevant Expectations Document were not appropriately applied; material from the dossier was unavailable to or disregarded by reviewers through no fault of the candidate; or information in the dossier was not considered in a fair and objective manner.

Additionally, faculty have the option to grieve procedural violations of the promotion and tenure process -- including violations of the appeal process presented in this section -- either after a negative decision on an appeal or instead of filing an appeal in the first place. Since the grievance procedures allow the grievant to state both the grievance they believe they have experienced and the relief they seek, it has a wider range of possible outcomes than the appeal process. However, it is also a slower process and would likely not be completed until the promotion and/or tenure cases in a given year have been decided, so should be thought of primarily as a means for faculty to seek an outcome they cannot seek through the appeal process. The grievance process is described in chapter three, "Faculty Grievance Policy and Procedures."

10) Expanded which cases can be appealed and simplified the appeal process (3.4.5.2, Page 15-16):

Current: Occasionally faculty members are evaluated for a tenured appointment during the probationary period but before the final probationary year. In such a case, there is no recourse to appeal or review of a negative decision, at whatever level it is reached, because of the certainty that the evaluation will be undertaken again within a limited time.

Evaluation for a tenured appointment is mandatory in the sixth year of probationary service unless the faculty member has given written notice of resignation from the faculty. If both the departmental committee and the department head or chair agree that the faculty member's record does not warrant a tenured appointment, there is an automatic review of the candidate's dossier by the dean. If the dean concurs, the faculty member is notified by the dean, in writing, of the decision and the specific reasons for it. The faculty member may then request, through the dean, that the college committee on promotion and tenure independently review the decision. The faculty member presents the appeal in writing as specified in chapter three "Appeals of Decisions on Reappointment, Tenure, or Promotion." The faculty member may elect to present oral arguments to the committee as well. If the committee concurs with the decision, the decision is final. The dean so notifies the faculty member, in writing, and no further appeal is provided.

During the automatic review of the candidate's dossier, the dean may wish to reserve judgment. In such a case, the dean notifies the faculty member of the departmental decision and tells the faculty member that he or she is requesting the college committee on promotion and tenure to undertake an independent review, as specified in the previous paragraph, and to make a recommendation. Should the college committee and the dean concur with the departmental

decision, the decision is declared final, the faculty member is so notified, and no further appeal is provided. The specific reason for the decision is provided to the faculty member in writing.

In any case of college-level review of a negative departmental decision, a positive recommendation by either the college committee or the dean is sent with the dossier to the University Promotion and Tenure Committee in the same way as in the usual review process.

If the college committee and the dean undertake the review based on a positive recommendation of either or both the departmental committee and the department head or chair and if the college committee recommends that tenure not be awarded and the dean concurs, the faculty member is notified of the negative decision with reference to appeal procedures. The specific reasons for the decision are furnished to the faculty member in writing. The faculty member may then appeal to the provost for review of the decision by the university committee, which makes a recommendation to the provost for a final decision. The faculty member presents the appeal in writing as specified in chapter three, "Appeals of Decisions on Reappointment, Tenure, or Promotion." No further appeal is provided. The university committee may choose to hear oral arguments.

Should the provost not concur with a positive recommendation from the University Promotion and Tenure Committee, whether that recommendation culminates a usual review or an appeal, the faculty member is so notified in writing of the specific reason for the decision. The faculty member may appeal to the [Faculty Review Committee](#). That committee investigates the case and, if the differences cannot be reconciled, makes a recommendation to the president on the matter. The president's decision is final.

During review following an appeal, the college committee may find reason to believe that the departmental evaluation was biased or was significantly influenced by improper considerations. In that case, the reviewing committee may request that the college dean form an ad hoc committee to re-initiate the evaluation. The ad hoc committee is composed, as feasible, of faculty members in the candidate's department or in closely allied fields and does not contain any members of the original committee.

Should the university committee make such a finding in the review of an appeal relative to the college evaluation, it requests the dean to form a new ad hoc committee at the college level. The ad hoc committee makes a recommendation to the committee that requested its formation.

Proposed: Appeal of negative department or college decisions: Because all mandatory tenure cases, even those given a negative recommendation by the department committee and the head or chair, receive a full college level review, there is no appeal of a negative tenure decision at the department level.

With all non-mandatory cases, whether promotion and/or tenure, if the committee and administrator both make negative recommendations, the candidate may appeal that negative decision to the next level in the process. The faculty member has the right to appear before the committee considering the appeal and present arguments.

If either the college committee or the dean grants the appeal of a negative department decision, the case resumes normal consideration, beginning with the college committee and dean. If either the University Promotion and Tenure Committee or the provost grants the appeal of a negative college decision, the case resumes normal consideration, beginning with the University Promotion and Tenure Committee and the provost. At either the college or University level, if

the committee and administrator both make negative recommendations, the appeal is denied and no further appeal is provided.

Appeal of negative University decisions: Because all recommendations from the University Promotion and Tenure Committee and the provost are forwarded to the president, candidates may appeal negative recommendations of either or both to the Faculty Review Committee. The faculty member has the right to appear before the committee to present arguments. The Faculty Review Committee investigates the case and makes a recommendation to the president.

The president's recommendation to the Board of Visitors, and the Board of Visitors' final decision, cannot be appealed.

11) Added a table of appeal options (3.4.5.2, Pages 16).